

Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan 2007 Annual Report

1.1 Introduction

In 2006 Washington State completed the Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan (FPHCP) for aquatic and riparian-dependent species on over 9 million acres of state and private forestlands. This was a multi-stakeholder effort in response to the federally threatened and endangered status of certain fish species. The stakeholder group was comprised of 5 caucuses including: environmental, Tribes, forest landowners, Federal government and State government.

The FPHCP was submitted to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) (collectively referred to as “the Services”). The Services accepted the FPHCP and formalized documentation of this 50-year agreement. Under the authority of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), on June 5 2006, the Services issued Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) to Washington State. The ITPs provide assurances for forest landowners, who conduct their forest practices in compliance with Forest Practice Rules, that they cannot be prosecuted if they inadvertently “take” a member of a riparian species covered by the ESA. The implementation of the FPHCP is a partnership between the Services and Washington State.

Three State agencies, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Washington Department of Ecology (DOE) work together to implement the FPHCP. DNR provides the majority of staff positions that implement the FPHCP because of the authority given the department in the Forest Practices Act (chapter 76.09 Revised Code of Washington (RCW)) and Rules (title 222 Washington Administrative Code (WAC)). However, both WDFW and DOE, have dedicated office and field staff time to support the various functions of the forest practices program and the implementation of the FPHCP. WDFW and DOE support includes participation in the following:

- The Cooperative Monitoring Evaluation and Research Committee (CMER),
- The Forests and Fish Policy Working Group,
- The Adaptive Management program,
- The Compliance Monitoring program,
- The Family Forest Fish Passage Program (FFFPP),
- The review of Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plans (RMAPs),
- The development of Forest Practices Board manuals,
- The evaluation of water type change proposals,
- The review of forest practices applications, and
- Interdisciplinary Teams.

The State is committed under the FPHCP to submit an annual report to the Services describing the implementation activities. The first annual report covers the period from June 5, 2006 to June 30, 2007. While the report describes the efforts within the forest

practices program and with our partners to implement the FPHCP, this initial year also required the State to begin establishing the foundation and planning tools necessary to ensure successful implementation of the FPHCP over the full duration of the agreement. During this first year, the implementation partners scheduled and committed to regular communication with the Services. Operational field and office procedures are being determined and put into place. The State and the Services have reached several agreements over the past year regarding the clarification and implementation of specific ITP conditions. In particular, this has required substantial efforts to establish the process to monitor and track 20-acre exempt forest practices applications, including developing a methodology to calculate the reduction in riparian function on these applications.

Establishing the necessary operational infrastructure to support FPHCP implementation is a continual work in progress. For example, work is on-going to establish the information needed to demonstrate RMAPs accomplishments; field processes are in the works to collect the required riparian harvest data on 20-acre exempt parcels; and discussions are underway regarding landowner/tribal meetings when a forest practice involves cultural resources. These are just a few of the on-going efforts to establish a solid foundation for successful implementation of the FPHCP.

1.2 2007 Report Highlights

Highlights of the FPHCP implementation since June 2006 are:

- On November 1, 2006, the Forest Practices Board (the Board) adopted a rule change to eliminate the option to use a default basin size to determine the demarcation between non-fish seasonal and non-fish perennial streams. This needed change was processed through the Adaptive Management program.
- The Forest Practices Division provided guidance to forest practices staff regarding protection on non-fish perennial streams (Np streams). All forest practices applications (FPAs) with 20-acre exempt parcels require trees to be left according to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 222-30-023(3) unless DNR determines the trees to be unnecessary for stream and riparian function.
- The forest practices program began a series of field audits to evaluate the implementation of the forest practices program at the region level.
- Forty easements were purchased under the Forestry Riparian Easement Program (FREP) and the Washington Legislature increased the funding for FREP from 8 million dollars to 10.5 million dollars for the 2007-2009 biennium.
- Since 2003, 450 fish passage barriers on small forestland ownership have been entered into the FFFPP and 122 have been repaired, opening up 266 miles of fish habitat.
- Since 2001, there have been 1,819 structures on large forestland ownership fixed on fish habitat streams, opening up 982 miles of fish passage.

- There were 111 non-conversion FPAs that used the 20-acre riparian exempt rules along fish-bearing waters. There were no applications within the spawning and rearing habitat of delineated sensitive bull trout areas.
- A methodology for tracking reduction in riparian function was developed for forest practices applications using the 20-acre exempt forest practices rules.
- The Compliance Monitoring program completed the “*Compliance Monitoring 2006 Field Season Interim Report*” (Washington DNR 2006). Eighty-one percent of the 278 total activities reviewed were in compliance with the forest practices rules.
- Ninety seven percent of RMAPS (the planning component) are completed.
- There were only 201 stop work orders and notices to comply written out of a total of 6,533 FPAs.
- The forest practices program implemented the Forest Practices Risk Assessment Tool in June 2006.
- DNR implemented the first annual statewide forest practices training for forest practice staff.
- DNR published the 2007 edition of the *Forest Practices Illustrated*, a non-technical guide to the State’s most common rules for forestry operations.

This report provides additional information related to each of these highlights in the relevant chapter that follows.